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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

S. Vietnam

~~SECRET~~ (When Filled In) — CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS — NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM — REPORT NO. TDCS DB-3/655,605

SUBJECT MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH COMMENTS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION AND ON THE NEED FOR A CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM — DATE DISTR. 18 JULY 1963

PRECEDENCE ROUTINE

DATE OF INFO. 13-16 JULY 1963 — REFERENCES IN 82003

PLACE & DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (17 JULY 1963)

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW — FIELD REPORT NO. FVS-9322

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE AN AMERICAN OBSERVER (B); FROM A UNITED STATES ARMY FIELD-GRADE OFFICER; FROM GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH.

APPR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH PROBABLY HOLDS THESE VIEWS AND MADE THESE STATEMENTS. HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN DISGRUNTLED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM SINCE 1960, AND EVEN THOUGH HE HAS NOT SO EXPRESSED HIMSELF PREVIOUSLY TO SOURCE (SEE PARA. 2.B).

1. SUMMARY. ON 16 JULY 1963 MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH, MILITARY ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT DIEM, CRITICIZED THE PRESIDENT, SAID THAT HE LACKED THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, AND ADVOCATED A CHANGE IN THE REGIME, BUT ASSERTED THAT NGO DINH NHU COULD NOT TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO SAID THAT BRIGADIER GENERAL DO CAO TRI WOULD REMAIN IN COMMAND OF THE 1ST DIVISION.

2. GENERAL MINH MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

A. PRESIDENT DIEM HAS CHANGED SO COMPLETELY THAT IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO REASON WITH HIM. IN THE EARLY DAYS HE HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE AND WAS VERY POPULAR THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIETNAM.

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GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

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IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER AT THAT TIME TO GAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE PEASANTS FOR THE VARIOUS PROGRAMS OF THE GOVERNMENT. THEN HE BEGAN SCREENING HIMSELF IN AND BY 1959 HE HAD LOST COMPLETE TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE. THAT MAY HAVE BEEN THE TIME TO HAVE CHANGED THE GOVERNMENT. AFTER 1960 DIEM CHANGED COMPLETELY, BECOMING CONVINCED THAT HE WAS OPERATING UNDER A MANDATE FROM HEAVEN. THIS WAS APPARENT IN HIS REMARKS ON 7 JULY WHEN HE SAID THAT THE COUNTRY WAS GUIDED BY "INTUITIVE WISDOM."

B. THE BUDDHIST ISSUE IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF DIEM'S IRRATIONAL ATTITUDE. DIEM TOLD MINH ON 13 JULY THAT THE BINH XUYEN, THE HOA HAO, AND THE CAO DAI WERE ALL STRONGER THAN THE BUDDHISTS. THEY HAD REGULAR ARMED TROOPS BUT THE GOVERNMENT WAS STILL ABLE TO DEFEAT THEM, SO WHY CANNOT THE GOVERNMENT ALSO DEFEAT THE MONKS, WHO HAVE NEITHER ARMS NOR MILITARY ORGANIZATION? MINH WAS UNABLE TO CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT THAT THE SITUATIONS WERE NOT THE SAME BECAUSE OF THE RIGID STAND DIEM HAS TAKEN WITH REGARD TO THE BUDDHISTS. (SOURCE COMMENT. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME MINH HAS MADE SUCH STRONG STATEMENTS AGAINST DIEM.)

C. THE BUDDHIST PROBLEM IS FAR FROM SETTLED. IT IS BECOMING WORSE AND UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT CHANGES ITS POLICY THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL BUDDHIST SELF-IMMOLATIONS.

D. THERE MUST BE A CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT. SOUTH VIETNAM

IS LIKE A YOUNG TREE; IT HAS FIRM ROOTS AND IS GROWING BUT IT MUST HAVE A PROPER ATMOSPHERE SO THAT ITS LEAVES, I.E., THE PEOPLE, CAN BREATHE. THIS IS LACKING IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

E. NGO DINH NHU CAN NEVER TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT; SHOULD HE SUCCEED, IT WOULD PROVE THAT THE VIET CONG (VC) ARE RIGHT IN CLAIMING THAT THE VC ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO REALLY FIGHT FOR THE PEOPLE. (SOURCE COMMENT: MAJOR GENERAL TRAN VAN DON, COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY, AND BRIGADIER GENERAL LE VAN KIM, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, ARE MINH'S CLOSE FRIENDS.)

VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN NGOC THO TOLD MINH ON 15 JULY THAT IT WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BUDDHISTS AND THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE SELF PRIDE OF CERTAIN KEY INDIVIDUALS, I.E., THE NHUS AND ARCHBISHOP NGO DINH THUC, HAD BECOME INVOLVED. THO HAS BEEN WANTING TO RESIGN BUT WAS NOT EVEN PERMITTED TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF RESIGNATION; HE STILL INTENDS TO GO THROUGH WITH IT, HOWEVER. (FIELD COMMENT: FVS-9243, (TDCS-3/552,503,) REPORTED THAT DIEM HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT THO'S WRITTEN RESIGNATION, SUBMITTED ON 1 JULY. FVS-9256, TDCS-3/552,565,) REPORTED THO'S STATEMENT THAT HE WANTED TO RESIGN BUT WAS UNCERTAIN AS TO THE TIMING.)

G. IF THE MILITARY PRESSURE AGAINST THE VC CAN BE CONTINUED AT THE PRESENT RATE FOR A YEAR, THE ARMY CAN DISRUPT THE VC ARMED

INSURGENTS. THE WINNING OF THE WAR AGAINST THE VC IS NOT SIMPLY A MILITARY PROBLEM, HOWEVER, BUT ONE THAT REQUIRES THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, AND THIS IS LACKING.

H. NO TROUBLE IS ANTICIPATED FROM THE VC ON THE 20 JULY ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS, BUT THE STUDENTS MIGHT CAUSE TROUBLE BECAUSE OF THE SUICIDE OF OPPOSITIONIST NGUYEN TUONG TAM.

I. BRIGADIER GENERAL DO CAO TRI WILL REMAIN IN COMMAND OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION FOR THE TIME BEING AND BRIGADIER GENERAL LE VAN NGHIEM WILL REMAIN IN COMMAND OF I CORPS, WHICH PLACES NGHIEM IN AN IMPOSSIBLE POSITION AS THE TWO MEN DO NOT GET ALONG WELL WITH EACH OTHER. TRI'S PROMOTION WAS DESERVED BECAUSE HE IS A VERY STRONG FIGHTER. (FIELD COMMENT. FVS-9302, TDCSDB-3/655,512, REPORTED NHU'S STATEMENT THAT TRI HAD BEEN PROMOTED AND NAMED COMMANDER OF I CORPS. FVS-9267, TDCS-3/552,485, REPORTED NGHIEM'S STATEMNT OF HIS DESIRE TO RESIGN FROM THE ARMY.)

3. FIELD DISSEM. STATE (AMBASSADOR NOLTING), USMACV (GENERAL HARKINS ONLY), CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF.

END OF MESSAGE